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ABSTRACT

Standard curricula at the primary level can be enlivened and enriched through storytelling and multi-ethnic literature, whereby teachers can introduce and reinforce a multicultural, unified world view. Through these materials, students in homogeneous monocultural environments can enjoy a broadened world view and new ideas to provide materials for their imaginations. Students in multicultural communities can contribute to the education of their peers by infusing the curriculum with their own experiences, thus creating a dynamic interchange. The teacher can assign "roots" projects and collect oral histories; the students can write to relatives and share their findings. Stories, assignments, projects, and activities can all reflect the particular character and culture of the class. (Thirty-four references are attached.) (KEH)

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Moving Toward a Multi-Ethnic Perspective

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About The Author

The author traces her earliest exposure to different cultures to her father, who used to sing to her in three languages: Arabic, Hebrew, and Yiddish. The students in the schools she attended were from professional, predominantly Caucasian, families. The only non-Caucasians were the Yano s - Korean , the Lee s - Chinese/American Caucasian, and the Christian s - Black (referred to as Negro in those days). The children in these three families attended grammar school, Junior High, and High School with the author. In the State of Maryland, the Chinese/American Caucasian marriage was not considered legal because of miscegenation laws; the oldest of the four boys, in addition to being considered an illegitimate child, confided he did not know what "race" he should enter on official forms. The Reverend Christian was a highly respected minister, and his son an excellent student and the senior class president; the author had a Jewish friend whose father was a member of the Anti-Defamation League and who refused to let his daughter see the Black minister's son socially.

Kipling's Kim has always been a favorite of the author, and she was trained in observation by her father, not as vigorously as Kim was by Lurgen Sahib, but trained nevertheless to observe manner and appearence and attend to the who, what, when, where and how of life by her writer parents, both former newspaper reporters. The author read Kim to her daughter at the early age of three days, perhaps contributing to her daughter's color blindness.

Education

The author received a Bachelor of Arts in English from Beloit College, Beloit Wisconsin, and a teaching credential from Dominican College in San Rafael, California. She is currently pursuing a Master's Degree in Education at Dominican.

Areas of Specialization

Reading and writing and making things, more formally called language and creative arts, and enjoying cultural diversity, formerly called Anthropology and now enjoying the less imposing description of Global Education, are the author's main interests.

Beliefs

The author traces her own interests in different people and cultures to her father's multi-cultural polylingual perspective, his descriptions of cuture and cultural cues and to armchair travelling, a trait which was transmitted by her parents. She feels knowledge of different people and cultures has enhanced her imagination and broadened her world view, and her interests are continually piqued by what she hears, sees, smells, touches, reads, and imagines.

Abstract

Standard curricula can be enlivened and enriched through storytelling and literature. Through these materials, students in homogeneous monocultural environments can enjoy a broadened world view and new ideas to provide material for their imaginations. Students in multicultural communities will contribute to the education of their peers by infusing the curriculum with their own experiences, thus creating a dynamic interchange.

Moving Toward a Multi-Ethnic Perspective

Introduction

Scholarly reviews run replete with descriptions of ethnically homogeneous populations. In my area, the elementary school down the hill a mile west from me has such a population, predominantly Caucasian and well-educated. The few Chinese, Japanese, and Iranian families are also well educated and well-heeled. In one third grade class, the teacher bids the children a French *au revoir* in the afternoons. There are no French children in the class, but French was the cultured tongue taught thirty years ago when the teacher went to school. She does not wish the children *khutha hafez* - may God protect you - which would reflect the culture of the bicultural American-Iranian and American-Pakistani children in the class, perhaps stimulating intellectual curiousity on the part of the western students and igniting a spark of pride in the ethnically eastern. The school character appears to reflect the dominant class culture rather than any particular ethnicity.

Over the hill and a mile north sits a middle school where twenty-five separate languages and dialects are spoken. Several sheltered English as a Second Language (ESL) classes accomodate relatively new arrivals from Central America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. The Southeast Asians generally speak four languages: their native tongue, French, a Chinese dialect, and English. The ESL students move out of the sheltered program and into the regular classrooms and the next wave of immigrants moves in. The ethnically

diverse mainstream classrooms contain recent immigrants as well as students of different nationalities, United States citizens and non-citizens whose families have been in the area for a number of years, and Caucasian U.S. citizens whose families have been in the area for generations. The school character is multi-ethnic.

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether storytelling has an effect on primary school children's perceptions of other cultures, and to discuss implications of this effect. Exposure through storytelling may occur within the family, from school, religious institutions, or media in the form of dramatic interpretations of literature, folklore or story motif though television, or movies. For the purposes of this study, the term culture is used to describe national, religious, racial and/or linguistic ethnicity, and cultural perceptions may be positive, such as openness toward other people and cultures, or negative, such as prejudice or xenophobia.

Rationale

As the aquisition of language is based on early exposure to hearing language (Crystal, 1987) childrens' aquisition of openness and positive feelings toward people of different backgrounds may be based on early exposure to people of different backgrounds.

According to the Swiss psychologist Piaget (Kendall, 1983), the egocentricity of preschool age children is a developmental stage through

which they must move before learning to value other people and developing sympathy and empathy towards them. Positive multi-cultural experiences can influence young children so that as they outgrow their egocentricity they will be able to move towards a multi-ethnic perspective, rather than remaining stuck in ego/ethnocenticity (Kendall, 1983).

Background and Need

America has always been a land rich in cultural diversity. Before Europeans arrived, many tribes of Native Americans -- themselves immigrants, perhaps from Asia across the Bering Strait -- shared the country, each with their own culture: language, religion, mythology, and physical characteristics. They left linguistic landmarks, naming the Dakotas, Penobscot Bay, Comanche, Kwinagak, and myriad other placenames. When Spanish, French, English, Russian, and African explorers, settlers, and slaves came, they changed the country's character, enriched the language, and left place names reflecting their respective points of origin: New York (formerly New Amsterdam,) the Carolinas, New Orleans, and words like goober peas, from Africa, (Brown, 1986) and cookie, probably Dutch (Guralnik,1974).

The British became the dominant and most powerful culture and began to work the citizenry into an Anglo-Saxon Protestant mold via the standard enculturation vehicles: social, economic and political institutions. The Melting Pot theory (Banks, 1981) was the philosophical justification for molding of the national character, the idea being that all European cultures would be blended to form a new and superior culture. It never happened (Banks, 1981).

Instead, immigrant children were taught contempt for their parents' cultures, and their parents accepted and promoted the new culture because they believed that was the way to gain entry into the new society. (Banks, 1981). In one generation, immigrants' memory of mother tongue diminished or completely vanished.

Initial and successive waves of immigration brought pain, struggle, and culture clash among people with tremendous cultural diversity. Instead of blending into one homogeneous character, we formed new groups, the Mexican-Americans, Russian-Americans, and African-Americans. To attain the trappings of the dominant group, successive im;migrants left much of their national heritage.

So many have come from so far that multi-culturalism is becoming the dominant culture. Changing the curriculum to reflect this new shift in classroom composition may benefit students and families already in the system, immigrants new to the country and social systems, and, ultimately the new world these students build as they exit the school system and enter adulthood and culture-disseminating and policy-making positions in the world at large.

By fostering positive attitudes among children of different cultural, racial, national, and linguistic backgrounds, teachers could lead children to greater cooperation, working together with others now and in future years, accepting co-workers and neighbors, and paving the way to world peace.

Review of the Literature

Racism

Oscar Hammerstein II put it gently in the muscial *South Pacific* He said "You've got to be taught to hate and fear", and you've got to be taught when you're young. Descriptions of this set of attitudes run the gamut: cautious, fearful, narrow-minded, ethnocentric, prejudiced, bigoted, racist. Raciscm can be individual or institutional, deliberate or not; whatever form it takes it is based on a belief of racial supremacy and it is expressed through oppression of people not in the dominant culture (Gay, 1973).

Proponents of multi-cultural education propose the converse of Lt. Joseph Cable's lyrical description of prejudice in *South Pacific*, speculating that if you can drum hate and fear into children "before they are six, or seven or eight" (Hammerstein) you ought to be able to drum some sensitivity and openness into them in their formative years instead.

Replacing racism with multi-culturalism is a revolutionary idea (Dickeman goes so far as to call it a "subversive task"). Since the 1830s, American schools have been designed to create a docile lower laboring class and and to select new members, whose attitudes, behavior and appearance fit the mold, from the lower class for the elite middle and upper classes. This recruitment was necessary because the middle class was rapidly expanding (Dickeman, 1973).

Through education, the standard enculturation vehicle used to *promote* racism, teachers can use education to eliminate racism and create a climate where individual differences can be expressed, affirmed, and respected (Kendall 1983).

Before the 1954 Brown versus Brown decision (Kendall, 1983), racism was overt in the schools in the form of segregation. Dual educational systems and segregation of black children, though the Supreme Court ruled that maintaining separate schools was "inherently unequal" (Kendall, 1983). In a recent survey, polled Southern Californians said they thought prejudice, though subtle, was still common (Roderick 1989). It may surface in different ways, but it surfaces nonetheless. Every year, the police or the county Human Relations Commission report around two hundred incidents of racial or religous violence (Baker, 1989).

A Multicultural Approach to the Education of Young Children

Research studies have shown that listening to a story can result in significant changes of attitude in young children (Berg-Cross & Berg-Cross, 1968). One hundred and twenty white, middle class five and six year old children attending nursery or kindergarten in the Newark, Delaware area were randomly assigned to one of five experimental or control story treatments. All children were read a story which did not express the social values explored in the four books read to the experimental group. Four pairs of experimenters administered different phases of the procedure. One experimenter administered the pre and posttests and did not know if subjects were in the control or experimental group. The second experimenter read the stories to the subjects. Subjects were asked to complete an unrelated "filler" activity after the story, then posttests were

administered to determine whether attitudinal changes had occured.

The results of the study were statistically significant, proving that listening to a story can result in attitudinal change. There was little change in the control group between the pre and posttest. In the experimental group, however, the children's attitudes changed positively: F-41.6, df=1, 112; p> .001. Because the study subjects were selected were all white and middle class, the results show that significant attitudinal change is likely to occur among white middle class listeners. It would be interesting conduct a similar study including various socio-economic groups to see what attitudinal change would occur.

Because children between the ages of 5 and 12 are developmentally flexible and receptive to people and ideas, this is the prime time to introduce and reinforce a multicultural, unified world view (Hoffman, 1987). Piaget refers to children's continuous development as a process of developing a national identity and conceptualization of social concept, again an indication that children can be reached and impressed with positive feelings towards diverse cultures and people (Torney-Purta, 1985).

Before children go to school, enculturation takes place through family and friends, media, and/or religious institutions. Then they enter the school system, which transmits further cultural belief and instills national beliefs. The children are curious and feel connected to others; this is the time to subvert instillation of enculturation of the dominant class and move toward appreciation of ethnic diversity instead of ethnocentric enslavement (Hoffman 1987, Kendall1983, Torney-Purta 1985).

Culture

Experience with and knowledge of many cultures can broaden world view, stimulate imagination, and aid understanding of community, appreciation of creative and performing arts, and world affairs.

I remember an exquisite moment in my own family, as my daughter -- she must have been less than three years old at the time -- was sitting on the lap of my German mulatto friend. "You know we two are a lot alike," said my daughter. "We both have red dresses and curly hair." There was not a word about color or accent.

Another moment, frozen in time like an old photograph, was the same daughter visiting my dying Yugoslavian friend. My friend's mother, who spoke Croatian and French but no English, was also visiting. My daughter knew enough about language to understand that she didn't have a language match with the older woman, but when tears came to the grieving mother's eyes my daughter hugged her and said "I love you."

In both cases the child had positive experiences with cultural diversity at such a young age she was unaware she was careening through racial, cultural and linguistic raceways older children or adults might consider treacherous; race, culture, and language are not roadblocks for the young.

Language, can identify your place in the society or group and can be used to manipulate role relationships. By changing the language they use, bilinguals can choose which group they identify with. Saville-Troike (1981) cites an example of a college student from Nepal who used three languages when going through customs. First the student used a neutral language,

Hindi, when talking with the customs official. However when the official began to question her about excess tea in her baggage and inferred black market motives, she switched to English, which marked her as an educated person in an elite social class. Finally, the student switched to her native tongue, probably Newari, to indicate solidarity with the guard, whom she identified (because of his accent in Hindi and English) as being from her area.

Not only can a speaker's facility with different languages be used to denote class and culture, but a speaker can effectively use dialects and accents within a language. In her introduction to Septima Clark's narrative, Ready from Within Brown (1986) says "But Mrs. Clark can talk in many different ways, depending on who her audience is, or who she imagines her audience to be. She speaks many varieties of the English language -- from a very African version as it used to be spoken on Johns Island, through black Charlestonese, white Charlestonese, white Appalachian English, to standard university English." Clark's changes of diction "reveal the cultural skills of a woman who learned to be at home with many races and classes of people."

The picaresque character Kim, in Rudyard Kipling's novel of the same name, thinks in whatever language seems appropriate, and takes on the religion, costume, and manners of whatever religion or caste he is affecting. "'I am here" said Kim at last, speaking in the vernacular; the smells made him forget that he was to be a sahib.'" When meeting Mr. Lurgen, the shopkeeper "'Kim looked over out of the corners of his eyes. He [Lurgen] was a Sahib in that he wore Sahib's clothes; the accent of his Urdu, the intonation of his English, showed that he was anything but a Sahib.'" Later, when

Lurgen tests Kim's mettle, "So far, Kim had been thinking in Hindi, but a tremor came upon him, and with an effort like that of a swimmer before sharks, who hurls himself half out of the water, his mind leaped up from a darkness that was swallowing it and took refuge in -- the multiplication tables in English!" (Kipling, 1962).

Though Gumbert (1985) states there is little literature examining how international perspective evolves, we can get a sense of the possibilites in the way we live our lives and reach out to other people.

The ten year old daughter of Indian friends has always addressed me as "Auntie" a cultural term of respect for an unrelated female adult. Recently she began addressing me as "*mousie* " which is Hindi for mother's sister. Her mother now calls me *"gigi"* which is older sister, and as there is no term for younger sister I now address her mother as *"behen*," Hindi for sister. For many years we have felt like family; now we have proclaimed this relationship linguistically.

Conflict

We are products of our culture-the combination of our home culture and that of the society in which we live, and even when we are aware and sensitive to other people's background and ideas, sometimes our cultures collide and clash.

Cultural values play an important part in the classroom as in the world at large. These values influence early socialization and the way children prefer to learn (Cox & Ramierez III, 1988). Individual learning and attention

styles - visual, aural or physical - can be influenced by cultural background.

Some Navajo children have highly developed visual discrimination and fine motor skills; they experience the world and learn best through sight and touch. In some Hispanic cultures, children are taught that making direct eye contact when addressing adults is disrespectful. When showing interest in the dominant culture is evidenced by direct eye contact, children who have been taught to respect adults by looking away can be at a distinct disadvantage (Kendall, 1983). Teachers, therefore, must walk the careful path between dissemination of the dominant culture and awareness of possible cultural collisions, cues, and miscues in their efforts to support students and discover why they react they way they do.

In addition to balancing cultural and lingistic plurism, many multiethnic students in California are also immigrants and/or children of immigrants in conflict because behaviors and values developed in war situations for survival are unacceptable in peacetime in the United States. These children are in conflict and pain (Olsen & Chen, 1988).

Children in Pain

Unlike the second generation immigrant children, many of these children have been abruptly and traumatically cut off from their homelands and traditional culture. Many have seen brutality - their own families murdered, been in camps, and experienced traumatic journeys leaving their home countries. During a time when other children their age are struggling with self-identity and separation from family, immigrant children must find

new identities in a new land, suffer the loss of family or find a way to live comfortably in a new land bridging the gulf between their home culture and a new one. Replicating their home culture would be isolating, but rejecting it would cut them off from support system and their past. (Olsen & Chen, 1988).

Mutual Benefits of Multiculturalism

Children in multicultural communities experience diversity firsthand; those in monocultural communities may have difficulty even imagining it. The narrow experiential and world view of these children cuts them off from the rest of the world and deprives them of the cross cultural competency they will need to function in today's changing culture and in the emerging culture born of migrations and immigrations. (Kendall, 1983, Olsen & Chen, 1988).

Teachers of students in homogeneous or monocultural areas must bring the world to their students in as many ways as they can. One source for history for students and teachers is our own immigration.

Part of the move towards multicultural educational reform is to use the wealth of our diversity, the stories of our immigration, our folk literature, art and music, the experience of our poverty, discrimination, and conflicts and pressures to conform, the record of our suffering and of our exhaultations, too, to teach our children. This is part of the revolution, and a move to correct the traditional curriculum (Dickeman, 1973).

Discussion

Towards a New Society

The theory of political predominance refers to political party or dominant social class, but can be extended, as by Gramschi (Gumbert, 1985), to cover dominant cultural ideology. Class control depends on acceptance of the dominant class ideological way of seeing things (Gumbert, 1985). People, then, are socialized to accept the views of the class in power. If multiculturalism is becoming the dominant culture, then our schools should be reflecting the cultural dominance, which will further enculturate our nation's youth to the current trend of multiculturalism.

Multi-Cultural Exposure Cross-Curriculum Through Family Stories

The stories of our own and our students' family histories can be used to teach history. Tante Bertha's voyage to America and disembarkation at Ellis Island (Falk, 1977) is a striking example of a mysterious disappearance of a sick child, subsequent three day quarantine of all the passengers, and the poignant reflection, 70 years later, of an old woman still wondering whether the child died of the disease or was thrown overboard so that she would not infect the other passengers.

The voices of our families and of our students' families speak to us (Krogness, 1987) A recent assignment in a sixth grade Richmond, California class to describe a "turning point" not only taught history but compassion as well (Nguyen, 1989). When quiet, slightly built Nga Nguyen read her "turning point" of planning to escape from Viet Nam, leaving her mother,

near drowning during escape, and stays at two Thai camps, her story gave new meanings to war, peace, and freedom to her classmates. They cried. Nga's telling her own story probably etched the experience in her classmates' minds.

Roots projects can include writing to relatives to find out about families. Students' letters reinforce writing and communication skills, replies strengthen family ties and provide material for the project. One such account provided the writer and her family with valuable information opportunities to discuss aspects of European history and religion, as well as family ties.

> "You asked about our antecedents. Well, they are both long and short on history. Basically Jews of Eastern and Western Europe are lost in hisory. Ours is one of progroms, Crusades, forced conversions, epidemics and fleeing from one place to another for sheer survival. Your Uncle Jacob's family can be traced to the 1700's because of their strict adherence to Chassadism-to the tenents of the Bal Shem Tov. The Bal Shem chose 38 people to spread the good word. This was in the Ukraine. But there were many lost in the turmoil. A great-great uncle was kidnapped by the Cossacks for the Tzar's army. He was of the few who survived, became an officer (naturally converted) but remembered where he was born and once came to visit his sister. In our own family, I have questioned Tante Sonia (92 years) but she has very little recall because her mother died when she was about five years old. Cemetary and synagogue documents were destroyed by the Nazis. I am sure the cemetary was descrated as well." (Lightman, 1983)

Pogroms, crusades, forced conversions, epidemics, fleeing for survival: a short clip from this great-aunt's letter provides ample material for historic discussion, map referral, and opportunites to explore literature and even Broadway musicals based on literature. Give them Arthur Miller's Monte Sant' Angelo (1982) for an example of a piece of fiction exploring forced conversions, The Diary of A Young Girl (Frank,1952) for survival, Journal of the Plague Year (Defoe, 1942) for epidemics. Show them "Fiddler on the Roof" and read Tevye's Daughters (Aleichem 1965); Show them Yentle and read Yentle The Yeshiva Boy (Singer, 1988).

Multi-Cultural Exposure Cross-Curriculum Through Literature

Though family stories provide excellent opportunity for idea expansion through use of literature, story telling and reading stand on their own. They are part of a record of our humanity, our struggle to to endure (Wilson, 1988) and to make sense of our lives. Folklore, too, can be used as a teaching tool, with the added advantage of reflecting many spectra of society, not just elite classes (Wilson 1988).

Bring poetry to science when you study the heavenly bodies. Hiawatha saw the moon.

"Saw the moon rise from the water,
Rippling, rounding from the water,
Saw the flecks and shadow on it,
Wispered "What is that, Nokomis?"
And the good Nokomis answered:
"Once a warrior, very angry,

Seized his grandmother, and threw her
Up into the sky at midnight;
Right against the moon he threw her;
'T'is her body that you see there." (Longfellow)

Do you recall Galileo? Didn't he cause a stir when he dropped those cannonballs from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa! Everyone expected the heavier cannonball to land first, but they both landed at the same time. What happened to Galileo? He got fired!

Do you recall the Greek mathemetician Archimedes? He tried to calculate how many grains of sand it would take to fill the universe. The number he came up with was so big, he had to come up with a way to express large numbers, and the system he invented was similar to the exponential system we use today.

And here's another story about Archimedes. He's the one who discovered the principle of buoyancy. He discovered it while he was taking a bath. He was so excited, he jumped up and ran out into the street, stark naked, yelling "Eureka!" That means "I found it!" and to this day, when people make a discovery they say "Eureka!"

When talking about interpersonal relations or music, remember disagreements are not uncommon, even among celebrated personalities. Remember Gilbert and Sullivan, the famous Victorian composer and librettist? They collaborated for fourteen "light operas" but had a serious falling-out; it was over a rug.

How to Bring Stories into the Classroom

To begin, you have your own stories. Even if you have not formally collected them, chances are you have a wealth of family stories in your head; write them down, even the little snippets.

On top of your own family stories, most people have a couple of favorite stories. When I was in my early twenties, I met Nikka Stanten Hazelton, a famous cook and author of many cookbooks. Apologetically I told her I only knew how to cook spaghetti and moussaka (a Greek casserole). She replied "Only? If you can cook those two things well, your friends will look forward to your spaghetti and moussaka." Cultivate your few favorite stories, and your students will look forward to hearing them as they look forward to eating special meals. Maybe yours may be the year of The Odyssey, The Canterbury Tales, Don Quixote, or Scheherazhade.

John Barth, in an interview about writing, spoke about "The Scheherazade Factor." He contends that through stories we "assimilate powerful influences without being dominated by them." Scheherazade's thousand and one tales saved her neck. The thousand and one tales teachers tell transmit information and emotion informally. "Narrating equals living. We are really alive as human beings only as long as we're still interested in telling antecdotes to one another" (Barth, 1987).

Emulate Scheherazade. "She had read much, and had so admirable a memory that she never forgot anything she had read. She had successfully applied herself to philosophy, medicine, history, and the liberal arts; and her poetry excelled the compositions of the best writers of her time. Besides

this, she was of perfect beauty, and all her accomplishments were crowned by surpassing virture." (Grosset & Dunlap collection, 1946) You may never become a Sultana, as she did, or have to save you own neck by telling stories, but you will enrich your own imagination and expand your own world, and, as you transmit these stories to your students you will enrich and expand their imaginations and worlds, too.

As you read stories read over and over again and become familiar and comfortable with them, put the books down and *tell* the stories. When the book is no longer in your hands, your hands are free to gesture, and your eyes, no longer tied to the written word, can make direct contact with your students, now your audience. This is intimate. You and your story and your audience are one. And then you can embellish the story, prompted perhaps by your audience's questions, perhaps by your own love of the period, readings, or knowledge gleaned from reading students' histories. When they ask what the sultan ate on his journey, if you've been to Persian or Moroccan restaurants, have read cookbooks or accounts of delicious eastern dinners, then you will know what the answer is. When they ask what delicious aromas the poor porter Hinbad smelled and what captivating melodies he heard as he squatted outside Sinbad the Sailor's door, use your imagination.

Imagination Training for Teachers and Students

If your imagination needs training, you can take your clue from Kim's

observation training as he played "the jewel game" in Lurgen's shop', looking at piles of gems or swords or photographs of natives, then describing them after they have been removed (Kipling). Look at the people you see every day, at your students.

Look at the color of their skin, from the palest peach to the richest chocolate; how do they change from season to season? When peach is tan in summer, is she that different from chocolate? Are Amer-Asian's eyes that different from Ashkenazie diaspora's, upturned and sometimes blued by hoards Cossacks sweeping across Asia?

Talk to people. Talk to grocers and butchers and carpet layers. I asked the Southeast Asian workers finishing my wood floor where they were from. They replied they were Blue Hmong. I pulled Peoples of The Golden Triangle (Lewis & Lewis, 1984) from the bookshelf and handed it to him. He flipped through the pages, pointed to a picture and said "That's my uncle." Encourged, I imagine, by an interested listener, he told me it was difficult for Blue Hmong to get jobs in the United States, because in their own culture they are not supposed to be boastful. If a prospective employer asks if they can do a job, the Hmong are likely to shrug their shoulders and say "maybe."

Years later, while shopping with my daughters, I saw a small Southeast Asian woman with a very large pile of beautiful black and lusterous hair on top of her head. I thought I remembered seeing that hairdo in the chapter on the Blue Hmong in Peoples of The Golden Triangle, so I asked her "are you Blue Hmong?" She was, and was, so delighted (again, conjecture) that someone showed an interest in her culture that she undid her hair. There

was not a single pin or elastic confining it, and her heavy tresses tumbled to her calves. The children were equally amazed with the woman's hair and my pegging her for Blue Hmong, thus providing an opportunity to demonstrate how we learn from books, and to promote reading and attention to the world around us.

Pay attention to smells, to the crushes of people in the stores at Christmas, in knots at corners on hot summer nights, and coconut oiled bodies on beaches. Note the aromas in different restaurants, in your kitchen as you cook, on your hands after slicing ginger. Have your students smell, then describe, then write. How does cotton candy taste? How does it feel on your tongue? Garlic, onions, ginger, chocolate; how do they taste?

Back to the Classroom:

Make your Class Character Reflect Your Classroom Culture

Draw on the diversity of backgrounds of your students to discover your classroom culture, to generate and display projects that reflect the particular flavor and character of your students.

Assign roots projects, collect oral histories, write to relatives, and share findings. Spotlight points of origin, play regional music, taste ethnic dishes. Create bulletin boards. Make time capsules.

Invite guest speakers: parents, grandparents, restaurant and grocery store owners. Spotlight folk crafts: North American quilts and Hmong story cloths. Did you know both tell political stories? Quilts sometimes proclaimed

wives political beliefs, unknown to their husbands who did not know the secret language of quilts. The black center of each flower in the "Radical Rose" quilt showed sympathy for slaves. The "Whig Rose," too, clearly showed where the quilter's sympathies were, *if* you knew the quilt name. Hmong story cloths are a recent creation of Laotian Hmong artists in Thai refugee camps. These pictorial textiles, created mostly for export to the United States, are a new and unique new art form with ah historical perspective. They tell of the fighting, destruction, and loss of life that spurred the exodus of Hmong and other people from Laos (Peterson, 1988).

There are thousands of stories. Scheherazhade alone tells a thousand and one, and there are many more. And when you bid farewell to your students, let that too reflect their ethnicity and your own. If you or they are French, then bid them fondly *au revoir*. But if they are Iranian or Pakistani, or you fancy yourself Scherazhade, then bless their departure with may God protect you, *khutha hafez*

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